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Overview of Authoring Collections

This module gives an overview of the collection creation process. This includes the modules and metadata of a collection. Each step is described in further detail in other modules.

What is a Collection?

A collection builds an ordered sequence of [modules](#). If you think of modules as individual building blocks, then collections are the things you can build out of those blocks - in this case textbooks, courses, lab manuals, journal issues, and so on. When viewed online, each module will be displayed as a separate web page with links allowing you to move between pages sequentially or jump to a specific point using the table of contents. In PDF format, modules in a collection are combined to form a single document that can be read as a book.

As a collection author, you are free to use any combination of published modules from the content repository, including content created by others. The collection composer allows you to arrange those modules in any order, create "chapters" or other hierarchical structures, and rename modules in order to give you complete control over the organization of the content. Once published, readers can access your collection as a free online ebook (available through the website), download a free PDF copy of your collection for printing or sharing, or even order a low-cost printed version of the text through our print-on-demand partner.

Creating Collections

Let's imagine you want to make a collection with the following structure of its contents:

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This collection contains an introduction, and two parts,
each containing two modules.

Creating a new collection is similar to creating a [new module](#). You can create a new link from the "Create New Item" dropdown in one of your [work areas](#), or you can check the "Create a new collection" link on the MyCNX home page:

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Go the "MyCNX" tab and select the "Create a new collection" link.

From there you must agree to the license for this collection, select a work area in which to edit the content, and then enter the collection's initial metadata.

After accepting the license, you will be asked to enter some basic information, or metadata, about your collection before getting started. (If you haven't already selected a work area in which to work on the collection, you will be asked to do so.) The basic metadata include:

- **Title (required)** A title for the collection
- **Language (required)** The primary language used in the collection
- **Collection Subtype** A subtype that reflects the intended use of the collection, such as Course or Report
- **Subject(s)** The subject categories that apply to the collection
- **Keywords** Terms that describe the most important topics in the collection
- **Summary** A brief description of the collection. You may markup the summary section with inline CNXML tags.

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Enter basic information about your collection here.

Click the **Next>>** button. The metadata entries are saved and the "Contents" tab displays with the title of the collection. This tab is where you do the actual assembly of the collection.

Editing Collections

Once you have opened a new or adapted collection within one of your Work Areas, you will need to edit the collection to add modules and other collection-wide parameters. The recommended sequence to perform these operations is described in this module and appears in the following list:

1. [Arrange](#) the collection contents. Edit how the title and links of the modules will appear when viewed within the context of the collection.
2. Edit the [metadata](#) to enter the appropriate search keywords and the collection title.
3. Edit the collection [roles](#). This sets the roles for the collection itself, but does not change the roles of the modules included in the collection.
4. Set the collection [parameters](#).
5. [Preview](#) the collection online.
6. [Publish](#) the collection.

Importing and Exporting to Connexions

This module gives an overview of the import and export pathways in Connexions.

Our editors allow you to work with your content online, anywhere, anytime, without needing to keep track of files on your local hard drive. While this works in most cases, there are also times when authors or developers would prefer working in an offline environment. Similarly, many authors with existing Word, OpenOffice, or LaTeX documents do not want to have to start over with a new document. The following sections describe the import and export options available to you through our platform, along with links to resources to help get you started.

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Importing a Module

There are several [types of importers](#) to help authors quickly upload and convert existing word processor documents into CNXML modules. These importers were designed to accommodate as many common cases as possible, but do require a certain degree of preparation to ensure that the documents are imported as accurately and completely as possible. If you are looking to import content, please be sure to read all of the documentation and template information provided *before* [using the importer](#).

Types of importers

The following importers are provided for working with existing or external content:

Word/OpenOffice Importer

You can use the Word/OpenOffice importer to import *.doc files and convert them to CNXML modules. You can use either Microsoft Word or an open source editor like OpenOffice Writer that allows you to save in the *.doc format to prepare your document. In either case, be sure to save with file extension *.doc, or as the Microsoft Word 97-2003 compatible version. The following links provide resources to help get you started:

- View the [Word Importer documentation](#)
- Download the [Word Importer template \(.dot\)](#)
- Download the [Word Importer example document \(.doc\)](#)

Remember that using the Word/OOo importer will **overwrite** any existing content, so only use this method when working with a new module or when you are sure you don't mind starting over.

LaTeX Importer

You can use the LaTeX importer to import .tex files (packed as a .zip file along with embedded media files) and convert them to CNXML modules. The following links provide resources to help get you started:

- View the [LaTeX Importer documentation](#)
- Download the [LaTeX Importer template \(.tex\)](#)

Remember that importing a LaTeX document into a module will **overwrite** any existing content, so only use this method when working with a new module or when you are sure you don't mind starting over.

Note: Please be sure to read all of the instructions in the help file and template very carefully, particularly the list of supported LaTeX packages. The vast majority of LaTeX importer errors are the result of using an unsupported package.

Plain CNXML Importer

For authors wishing to develop CNXML files in an external editor, you can upload your files (saved as plain text files with the *.cnxml extension) using the Plain CNXML Importer. You can learn more about the structure of a CNXML document in the [CNXML Tutorial](#).

This importer will **overwrite** the current CNXML module with the contents of the file provided, so only use this method when working with a new module or when you are sure you don't mind starting over.

Several authors have asked if we provide support for offline CNXML editing. While we do not currently provide such support, we are interested in developing this at some point in the future provided there is sufficient interest for our authors. If you would be interested in contributing to this development, please email techsupport@cnx.org and let us know!

ZIP Importer

The ZIP Importer is unique in that it is the only importer that does not necessarily overwrite the contents of the module. The contents of the .zip file are uploaded to the *Files* tab of the module, replacing/updating any contents of the same name that already exist.

- If the ZIP file contains a file called *index.cnxml*, then **the module contents are overwritten** just as they are with the Plain CNXML importer.
- If the ZIP file contains files with the same name as previously attached files, then those files are replaced with the new version. This feature makes the ZIP importer a convenient way to update several images, downloads, or other supporting resources at once.
- If the ZIP file contains files which are not already attached to the module, then those files are added just as if they had been added manually through the *Files* tab. This feature makes the ZIP importer a convenient way to "batch upload" several new supporting resources at once.

Note: The module file structure does not support folders or subdirectories. Any folders or subdirectories in the zip file that you import into a module will be ignored.

Using the module importers

1. If you have not already done so, [create](#) a new blank module.
2. Use the help documents linked above to ensure you have prepared your document correctly; otherwise you may get an error.
3. The importer dropdown menu is accessible on both the module **Content** tab and the **Files** tab when editing the module. Choose the importer type from the dropdown menu and click **Import**.

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The module import menu (expanded).

4. On the next page, browse to your saved file on your harddrive and click **Import**.

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The import document page.

You can mix and match any of the different importer types to meet your needs; for example, you can upload new files while simultaneously updating existing images, replace the index.cnxml file without affecting other existing resources, etc. This importer can be used as a batch uploader, as an extension of the Plain CNXML importer, or in conjunction with the [ZIP exporter](#).

Importing a Collection

Importing collections is currently not supported; however, we have recently begun laying the groundwork to make this feature available at some point in the future. If you are a developer and would like more information regarding the current support of exported or third-party CollXML documents, please contact techsupport@cnx.org for assistance.

Exporting a Module

You can export a module for offline editing, to create a backup of your content, or to use with an external platform that supports the use of CNXML documents. You can export a module from your workgroup by checking it out and using the "Export" menu in the module editor:

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The module export menu (expanded).

There are two options available for exporting modules:

- **Plain CNXML** allows you to download the [CNXML](#) file for the module, which contains all of the module text and CNXML markup. The exported file is titled "<moduleid>-plain.cnxml", where <moduleid> is the module's ID number.
- **Zip File** allows you to download the module's CNXML file (titled "index.cnxml") along with all attached resource files (such as embedded images, downloadable handouts, etc.).

You can also access the CNXML source code for any published module by appending "source" to the module's URL (e.g. <http://cnx.org/content/m10884/latest/source>).

Exporting a Collection

You can use the collection export feature to download a copy of a collection for external use. There are two versions of the collection available:

- The **complete version**, which includes information about the collection structure as well as the complete contents of all component modules.
- The **CollXML-only version**, which includes only the structural information for the collection and does not include component modules.

When viewing the published version of a collection online, you can export both versions of the collection from the metadata page - simply scroll to the bottom of the collection home page and click on the 'Metadata' link, and locate the appropriate link at the bottom of the 'Metadata' section.

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The collection export option from the collection metadata page.

Collection authors can also download both versions of the collection export file from their workgroup after publishing a collection, and can download the CollXML-only version from any checked-out collection.

Note: There is currently no support for importing collections, including those exported through this feature. At present, the collection export feature is provided primarily for developers interested in taking advantage of existing content for use with external platforms supporting CollXML/CNXML documents.

The Collection Export File (complete version)

The complete exported collection is packaged as a ZIP file titled "<collectionid>_<version>_complete.zip", where <collectionid> and <version> are the collection's ID and version number, respectively. Once expanded, this version of the exported collection contains the following:

- A [CollXML](#) document (titled "<collectionid>_<version>_collection.xml") describing the collection's structure.
- For each component module, a folder titled "<moduleid>" (the module's ID). Each of these folders contains:
 - The [CNXML](#) document for the module (titled "index.cnxml").
 - Any resource files, such as embedded images or downloadable handouts, that are attached to the module.

The Collection Export File (CollXML-only version)

The structure-only version of the exported collection is available as a downloadable [CollXML](#) document titled "<id>_<version>_collection.xml", where <id> and <version> are the collection's ID and version number, respectively. The CollXML file contains information about the collection including references to component modules, the order in which they are presented in the collection, and chapter/section information, along with a copy of the collection metadata.

For more information regarding the contents of the collection export file, please see the [CollXML help page](#).